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ABSTRACT

Founded in 1969, the Migrant Student Record Transfer System (MSRTS) is a nationwide computerized information network which records, maintains, and rapidly transfers educational and health information on more than 750,000 identified migrant children in 29 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Based in Little Rock, Arkansas, the federally funded system operates under a contract between the United States Department of Education and the Arkansas Department of Education. When a child moves, his/her records are forwarded to the enrolling school after MSRTS receives notification, allowing the new school to concentrate on serving, rather than identifying, the child's needs. The MSRTS has been implemented in approximately 30% of public schools (about 25,500 schools). The program's success can be attributed to effective training by MSRTS personnel at regional workshops, local site training, stream conferences, national conferences, or MSRTS quarterly workshops. The training curriculum during these sessions may include the MSRTS Health Record, the MSRTS Education Record, the Data Entry Specialists Operation Manual, and training in computer and program operation. Additional information about the MSRTS may be obtained from local school district migrant program offices, state migrant education programs, or by writing to the Migrant Student Record Transfer System, Arch Ford Education Building, Little Rock, Arkansas 72201. (NEC)

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ERIC DIGEST

# MIGRANT EDUCATION

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## Migrant Student Record Transfer System: What Is It And Who Uses It?

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March 1986

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# MIGRANT EDUCATION

## MIGRANT STUDENT RECORD TRANSFER SYSTEM: WHAT IS IT AND WHO USES IT?

When the federal Migrant Education Program was created in 1966 to provide supplemental educational and supportive services for eligible migrant children, it included the requirement that the records of migrant children be transmitted from school to school. Since migrant children move so often from school to school, this task was impossible without an effective communications system for tracking these students. Therefore, in 1969, the Migrant Student Record Transfer System (MSRTS) was created to provide schools with a method to continuously maintain education and health records on migrant students. This digest will provide a brief description of the Migrant Student Record Transfer System.

**What is the Migrant Student Record Transfer System?**

The MSRTS is a nationwide computerized information network which maintains and transfers education and health data from school to school as migrant children move with their families. The primary purpose of the system is to assist the education and health communities in providing continuity of services for migrant children. Through the student's records, available shortly after a move, school officials know the status of the student's educational progress and health condition. The federally-funded system operates under a contract between the United States Department of Education and the Arkansas Department of Education.

From its base in Little Rock, Arkansas, the MSRTS records, maintains, and rapidly transfers educational and health information on more than 750,000 identified migrant children in 49 states in the United States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. When a child moves, his/her records are forwarded to the enrolling school after MSRTS receives notification. The school can then concentrate on **serving** the child's needs rather than **identifying** those needs.

**Why was the Migrant Student Record Transfer System created?**

Prior to 1968 there was a lack of continuity in the educational program for migrant children throughout the states. In that year, representatives from 37 states held a conference to discuss this lack of continuity and other problems, including the transfer of educational information about migrant children from one state to another and from one teacher to another.

The Record Transfer Committee, established out of this conference, was charged with two responsibilities: (1) to design an appropriate student record and (2) to design a transferral system. The conference also asked the United States Office of Education to serve as the contracting and monitoring agency for the system.

Since its inception, the system has coordinated its efforts with local and national migrant programs, medical facilities, and countless other entities directly or indirectly responsible for serving the migrant population.

**How are computers used in the operation of the MSRTS?**

The MSRTS utilizes computers in all areas of operation. There are computers or terminals located in areas where there are enough migrant students to require a terminal. Most often, a communications center will accommodate several schools. The local schools may transmit critical data on the child by telephone to the communications center. Routinely, however, data are transmitted by mail, courier or telephone.

Computers are used by data entry specialists to enroll new students, to withdraw students when they leave a school, to update data on a student's record, and to inquire about student's health and educational history.

In addition to the immediate use afforded teachers and health personnel, computers are used to produce specifically requested data which may be used by local, state, and federal administrators.

**Who are migrant students?**

A migrant student is a child whose parent or guardian is a migratory agricultural worker or migratory fisherman who has moved from one school district to another or from one school administrative area to another during the regular school year. The child must have had his education interrupted as a result of this move. The move must have been made to enable the child, the child's guardian, or a member of the child's immediate family to obtain temporary or seasonal employment in an agricultural or fishing activity. The migrant child's status is based on his or her family's move and the type of labor in which the parent is involved. Migrant statuses are: (1) currently interstate agricultural, (2) intrastate migratory agricultural, (3) former migratory agricultural, (4) currently interstate migratory fisher, (5) intrastate migratory fisher, and (6) former migratory fisher.

**What are the unique problems of migrant students?**

The migrant child who travels constantly with his family is almost always confronted with other critical problems. Poverty and deprivation have become a way of life for many of these children. The family is usually isolated from the community by distance, language barriers, and cultural differences. Thus, educational discontinuity is a problem that often is intensified by the presence of emotional and physical problems.

On the average, migrants are 1 year older than their classmates. Their drop out rate begins to accelerate in the eighth grade. Their needs include not only compensation for missed schooling, but often bilingual or English language instruction. "... achievements of migrant children appear to fall farther behind that of the general population as the children get older" (Education Times, October 1981). High schools face a different but related problem: keeping track of whether a migrant student is accumulating enough credits in the right courses for graduation. Before the inception of the MSRTS the retention rate of migrant students through high school was nearly zero. Today, the graduation rate for migrant students is estimated to be between 10% and 20%.

Cohesive and well-planned cooperative educational pacts are essential to a successful migrant education program. That is, if educational continuity in the migrant child's program is to be achieved, there must be regional and interstate cooperation and planning. For the migrant student, schooling remains a rapid succession of schools and teachers, but through increasing coordination, every new classroom the migrant student enters can be a true home room.

The MSRTS has brought migrant education a long way in its 15 years of operation. However, the overall needs of the migrant child can be met only partially by a program such as the Migrant Student Record Transfer System. Further advances are possible if federal funding continues.



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**Who does the Migrant Student Record Transfer System serve?**

Any school, agency, or organization that serves migrant children is eligible for the services of the Migrant Student Record Transfer System. The MSRTS has been implemented in approximtely 25,500 schools throughout the country. The system provides school officials, administrators, principals, teachers, nurses, and others with up-to-date information on migrant students.

In addition to transmitting student records, the system also provides management reports and reports in other program areas to state program administrators upon request. These reports are used by program administrators to evaluate and assess program effectiveness and needs. Such information sharing has become invaluable to many states, schools, and health facilities that must know the number of migrant students they are serving, and, just as importantly, those students' educational and health profiles. The MSRTS is responsible for the training of state and local personnel on an ongoing basis. Upon completion of this training, teachers, nurses, clerks, administrators, and state directors are able to implement the computerized system in their specific locality.

If utilized to its full potential, the MSRTS can serve as an excellent planning and evaluation tool for state programs, schools, or health facilities serving migrants.

**Who utilizes the Migrant Student Record Transfer System?**

The MSRTS is utilized by approximately 30% of the public schools in the United States, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. The system is utilized by countless health facilities located throughout these areas which are subcontracted to provide health services to migrant students. State migrant education programs utilize the system's data retrieval capabilities. Many states request and receive various management reports created and produced by the MSRTS. Again, this information is used in countless ways to improve local migrant education operations.

**What is the MSRTS training process and who is trained?**

Training is the one most important element in the operation of the MSRTS. The success of the program over the years can be attributed to effective training by the MSRTS personnel. Although training styles or tools may differ with each trainer, the main objective of the training itself has remained the same for 15 years — to make appropriate personnel aware of the MSRTS process and how to most effectively implement it locally.

MSRTS training is done through regular workshops held either at the MSRTS headquarters or at a specific local site. These training sessions may be billed as regional workshops, local site training, stream conferences, national conferences, or MSRTS quarterly workshops.

Training is done most often by MSRTS personnel (i.e., regional supervisors, regional coordinators, managers, or data processing staff) in Little Rock, Arkansas. Participants in training sessions usually include new or veteran MSRTS personnel such as clerks, aides, data entry specialists, health personnel, and program administrators.

The training curriculum during these sessions may include any of the following items of information: the MSRTS Health Record, the MSRTS Education Record, the Data Entry Specialists Operations Manual, and training in computer and program operations.

**How does the MSRTS serve as a link between migrant education and migrant health?**

While the MSRTS provides both health and educational histories of the migrant student, the complete profile given is what makes the program invaluable. The child's health will almost inevitably affect his/her educational well being. Therefore, it is of ultimate importance that information sharing be an intricate part of all school and health facilities.

Upon enrollment in a new school, the child's academic data, such as participation in special programs, special interests, or skill levels are used to place the child. However, the child's physical exam results, innoculations, dental services, and any other health information unique to the child are also necessary.

The collaboration between the health and education entities removes the possibility of providing needless health services to the migrant child while bringing any critical problems the child has that may affect his/her learning capabilities to the attention of school personnel. Often, such information is in the form of a critical data message which accompanies the child's educational data. This message contains information considered vital to the initial placement and care of the child.

**How do schools and health facilities utilize the Education and Health Records?**

The purpose of the MSRTS Education and Health Records is to provide necessary personnel with a comprehensive profile of a migrant student who recently enrolled in a school. The child's educational and medical history has been generated in the form of a record and is transmitted to each new school with updated information as the child moves.

In a nutshell, the Education and Health Records assure proper placement of migrant students in a timely manner. The health record contributes to this service by providing health personnel with an up-to-date profile of the child's health problems or services received, thereby avoiding duplication of services.

**How and where can more information be obtained about the MSRTS?**

Additional information about the MSRTS may be obtained in any one of the following ways:

- contact the local migrant program office in your school district.
- contact your state's migrant education program under the auspices of the state's education department.
- contact the Migrant Student Record Transfer System by writing to:

Migrant Student Record Transfer System
Arch Ford Education Building
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201
(501) 371-1850

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